

Colvin Clarke, R. & Kwinn, A. (2007). Features to Exploit in the New Virtual Classroom in *The New Virtual Classroom Evidence Based Guidelines for Synchronous e-Learning*. (p. 45-67). San Francisco CA: Pfeiffer

In this chapter Clarke and Kwinn argue that the medium used to deliver courses does not guarantee the effectiveness of the instruction, the way particular features of the technology are used in isolation or together will either promote or hinder the instruction process. They suggest that it is necessary to factor in the constraints related to the technology when designing training and identify four features of the virtual classroom that should be leveraged. Clarke and Kwinn discuss how the virtual classroom supports each of the features identified compared to other delivery media. To finish the authors suggest that where emerging technology is used merely to deliver content it will get a bad name and the promise of the virtual classroom lies in leveraging its features in a way that promotes the learning process. To illustrate their point there is an expert's forum illustrating how to put their advice to practical use.

Clarke and Kwinn's experience with cognitive load and the modality principle is brought to the fore in this chapter as they discuss ways to leverage the technology. Although their theory suggests that a high level of text will increase cognitive load when used with graphics and audio they acknowledge that there is a need to use text at certain times and provide the reader with suggestions as to how it can be done. The four features outlined could be applied to face to face training as much as online and provide a simple framework for designers to consider when adapting existing training or preparing a new module.

As I become familiar with the technology being introduced, I'm concerned that some of the features I have experienced in other virtual classroom technology such as a white board are not part of the package. As a result I feel that it is more important than ever to leverage what is there to make up for what is not there. This chapter provides me with some thoughts on what can be done and that there may be a need to become more creative with content design. The chapter also provides relevant advice that I can provide to trainers who are new to using the technology as they start to think about content design and delivery.